It all started with a clear statement of commitment during the German Protestant Kirchentag in summer 2019: “Let’s send a rescue ship to the Mediterranean Sea”. #WirschickeneinSchiff

This idea is now becoming reality. The Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and Sea Watch, a registered association, have formed an action coalition called „United4Rescue – Gemeinsam Retten“.

The coalition is collecting donations and pushing ahead the plans to send an additional rescue ship. At the same time, it is a broad-based social alliance for search and rescue (SAR) operations. We have only one goal: saving human lives on the Mediterranean as long as there is a lack of political will and governments do not provide SAR services.

Every organisation can participate as a coalition partner - sports clubs, companies, church congregations, schools, cultural associations or voluntary initiatives. We want a strong social alliance that makes it clear: the right to life is non-negotiable and rescuing people in distress at sea is a humanitarian obligation.

“YOU DON’T LET PEOPLE DROWN. FULL STOP.”
WHY WE NEED A COALITION NOW

Over 19,000 people have drowned in the Mediterranean since 2014.

All government search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean have now been terminated. The few remaining civil rescue organisations are even being treated as criminals – after first being celebrated nationally and internationally for their voluntary commitment.

We don’t want to stand by and watch this happening any longer. The more individuals and organisations advocate for rescuing people in distress at sea, the sooner the disaster can be ended. We must not become accustomed to people dying in the thousands. Nor must we accept it as a matter for cynically calculating the pros and cons, however huge the political challenge might be. The United4Rescue coalition aims to send an SOS for humanity from the centre of society. As an open platform, we demonstrate that there is a majority for humanity and human rights.

United4Rescue links people and organisations. It guides through the confusing information situation on the topic. Last but not least, it collects donations, in order to launch an additional rescue ship as soon as possible. Our partner Sea-Watch, which conducts SAR missions, will operate the ship and is already looking for a suitable vessel.

Donations exceeding the sum needed to purchase the ship will be passed on to rescue organisations in urgent need of support. Operational rescue ships should not be forced to lie at anchor because the respective organisation lacks the money for them to go to sea. In such cases, United4Rescue will assist these organisations rapidly and unbureaucratically.

1 Source: International Organisation for Migration (IOM), November 2019
Rescuing people in distress at sea is an obligation
Maritime SAR is an obligation under international law and the right to life is non-negotiable. The European Union (EU) and its Member States must guarantee this on the Mediterranean.

No criminalisation
Civil SAR operations must no longer be obstructed or treated as a criminal offence.

Fair asylum procedures
Refugees arriving by boat must be taken to a safe place where they have access to a fair asylum procedure. The EU Member States have made this commitment. The non-refoulement principle is binding under international law. Accordingly, people must not be turned away and returned to countries where they are in danger and have no rights.

Enable safe havens
Cities and communities wishing to accommodate additional refugees must be allowed to do so.
BECOME A
COALITION
PARTNER NOW

Support our appeal and join United4Rescue today! With your name or your institution, assist us in ensuring that the fate of refugees in the Mediterranean is not forgotten.

All coalition partners will gain visibility when their logo is displayed on www.united4rescue.com. They will receive information and campaign materials for publicity and fundraising, including background information about the situation in the Mediterranean. Coalition membership does not entail any financial commitment.
What does a rescue ship cost?
Vessels suitable for carrying out professional SAR operations on the high seas are priced at around one million EUR or more. While the exact price is not yet known, we expect it to be in that range.

When will the rescue ship be ready to sail?
It is our goal to commission the vessel as fast as possible. We hope it will be ready to depart in spring 2020. Before that, many different steps remain to be taken. We have to collect the necessary donations and find a suitable ship for purchase. The ship will need some reconstruction to fit it out for rescue missions – and finally it will have to be moved to the Mediterranean.

Under what flag is the ship to sail?
The rescue ship will be registered under the German flag.
Who is behind the coalition?
United4Rescue is backed by an independent, non-profit association under German law. Many members of the association have been engaged in civil SAR for years and support the coalition with their expertise and their contacts.

How will United4Rescue carry out its assistance?
The coalition supports civil SAR operations from donations and subsidies from persons and organisations that want to support its activities.

What SAR organisations will United4Rescue support?
As a coalition we intend to support a number of different rescue organisations and, above all, assist those suffering from an acute shortage of finance for their expeditions. Our fundraising campaign #WirschickeneinSchiff for an additional ship to be operated by Sea-Watch is only the first project.

How can individuals support United4Rescue?
From 3 December 2019 individuals can support the coalition through single donations or a sponsoring membership.
United4Rescue is backed by an independent non-profit association under German law. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Titus Molkenbur, coordinator
partner@united4rescue.com

Joachim Lenz, spokesperson
presse@united4rescue.com